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PRESS RELEASE

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MEDIA NOTE

The United States-Nigeria Bi-National Commission Joint Communique

The United States-Nigeria Bi-National Commission (BNC) met on March 30, 2016, in Washington, D.C. The BNC was co-chaired by Geoffrey Onyeama, Honorable Minister of Foreign Affairs, Federal Republic of Nigeria and Antony Blinken, Deputy Secretary of State, United States of America. U.S. National Security Advisor Susan Rice provided opening remarks, and Secretary of State John Kerry met the group and hosted a working lunch.

During President Muhammadu Buhari's July 20-22, 2015, visit to Washington, President Buhari and Secretary Kerry underscored the need to strengthen and revitalize the BNC to advance our overall relationship and spur joint action on key issues.

At a meeting on November 13, 2015, between an interministerial group led by the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Federal Republic of Nigeria, and the U.S. Ambassador to Nigeria, the two sides underscored the need to reinvigorate the BNC as a forum for focused, high-level discussions. They identified three areas of focus:

- Security Cooperation
- Economic Growth and Development
- Governance and Democracy

The two sides subsequently developed a detailed agenda and added a working bilateral lunch on Multilateral Cooperation.

Joint Goals

The BNC reviewed a paper setting out proposed joint goals for each agreed area of focus. It directed working groups be established for each area of focus, and that these working groups finalize the paper within one month.

Security Cooperation

The BNC's discussion on security cooperation was co-chaired by H.E. Mansur Dan-Ali, Honorable Minister of Defense, Federal Republic of Nigeria, and Deputy Secretary of State Antony Blinken.

The BNC jointly determined to take further actions to advance U.S.-Nigeria security cooperation to promote peace and security in Nigeria, especially in northeastern Nigeria and the broader Lake Chad region. Both sides recognized that this cooperation includes, but is not limited to, military cooperation.

The BNC noted the continued threat to peace and security posed by Boko Haram, which is now an affiliate of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). The United States reaffirmed its support for Nigeria and its neighbors in countering this threat.

The BNC noted that the Governments' bilateral security cooperation focuses both on immediate threats and medium and long term security and stabilization objectives.

The BNC discussed the situation of refugees and internally-displaced persons (IDPs) in Nigeria and the region, and the Governments decided to work together to create conditions for their safe and voluntary return.

The BNC also discussed measures to counter violent extremism and encourage defections from Boko Haram; the importance of protecting civilians and safeguarding human rights; the need for integrated planning for the restoration of full civilian authority, resettlement and reconstruction; the need to understand and eliminate sources of terrorist financing; and ways to expand intelligence sharing.

The BNC established a Working Group on Security Cooperation and directed that it meets within six months to review progress on joint goals.

Economic Growth and Development

The BNC's discussion on economic growth and development was co-chaired by Mr. Okechukwu Enelamah, Honorable Minister of Industry, Trade and Investment, Federal Republic of Nigeria, and Deputy Secretary of State Antony Blinken.

The Nigerian side expressed appreciation for the efforts of the U.S. government and the contributions of key stakeholders such as the Corporate Council on Africa (CCA) and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce towards the successful hosting of the Nigerian –United States Business Forum and Reception Dinner.

Both sides acknowledged the major outcomes of the Business Forum which stressed the need for increased United States investments in Nigeria through the provision of an enhanced business climate, policy predictability, and transparency.

The BNC noted the Governments' decision to take further actions to promote prosperity and growth, economic diversification, and job creation through policies that will improve the environment for doing business together. In this respect, the BNC recognized that sound macroeconomic policies are important to managing the challenges of declining global oil prices.

The BNC noted the Governments' pledge to work together to ensure maximum utilization of current programs to promote trade and investment, including the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) and the Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA).

The BNC recognized the importance of infrastructure development for Nigerian economic growth, noting particularly the importance of increasing access to electricity and improving efficiency to lower its cost. The BNC also discussed ways to expand cooperation on renewable energy and integrated water resource management.

With respect to economic diversification, the BNC noted the potential for expanded agricultural investment and production, as well as the role played by extractive industries, including solid minerals, petroleum and natural gas.

The BNC established a Working Group on Economic Growth and Development and directed that it meet within six months to review progress on joint goals.

Governance and Democracy

The BNC's discussion on governance and democracy was co-chaired by Mr. Abubakar Malami, Minister of Justice, Federal Republic of Nigeria, and Deputy Secretary Antony Blinken.

The BNC noted the historical importance of Nigeria's 2015 elections and the peaceful transition that ensued. The United States intends to support Nigerian efforts towards improving the quality of elections, and looks to Nigeria to support elections and democracy throughout Africa.

The BNC decided to strengthen their joint efforts in support of good governance, anti-corruption, and enhanced delivery of public services, including national institutional frameworks for peace building and conflict management to strengthen Nigeria's democracy and promote inclusive prosperity.

The BNC recognized that the United States intends to continue its support for the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and other anti-corruption agencies, as appropriate.

The BNC discussed the Open Government Partnership (OGP) and the Partnership on Illicit Finance (PIF). The United States noted the potential benefits to Nigeria of membership in these two initiatives. The Nigerian side agreed to respond to the outstanding invitations to join these partnerships in due course.

The BNC noted the Governments' decision to intensify their work together to help Nigeria trace funds and assets stolen through corruption and other illicit activities and seek to recover the assets.

The BNC decided to expand people-to-people contacts between the two countries, including efforts such as the Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI).

The BNC established a working group on governance and democracy and directed that it meet within six months to review progress on joint goals.

Multilateral Cooperation

At its working lunch, the BNC discussed issues including climate change, strengthening ECOWAS to promote regional economic integration, and the potential provision of UN financial support for conflict prevention, and the financing of UN Security Council-approved African Union peacekeeping operations.

Vote of Thanks and Next Meeting

The Government of Nigeria thanked the Government of the United States for hosting the meeting of the Bi-National Commission. It was determined that the next meeting of the full BNC should be held in Nigeria within one year at a date to be mutually agreed through diplomatic channels.

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Relevant information about U.S. policies and programs in Nigeria can be found on our websites:
<http://nigeria.usembassy.gov>



